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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Briefing of Congressman Overton Brooks (D., La.)

1. Mr. Bissell and I met with Congressman Overton Brooks, Chairman of the House Science and Astronautics Committee, 4 p.m., 11 May.

2. Mr. Brooks stated that inasmuch as his Committee had jurisdiction over NASA they had asked for a report as soon as the U-2 story first broke, and NASA had given them a report about a plane being missing from Turkey. Mr. Brooks said that when the subsequent information appeared in the press recanting the NASA story and admitting the intelligence operation several members of his Committee pressed for an investigation as to how deeply NASA was involved. He felt it would be essential for him to talk to at least a few key members of his Committee to avoid such an investigation.

3. Mr. Bissell thereupon gave Mr. Brooks a very general background briefing on the initiation and development of the project. Mr. Brooks stated he had heard people call the U-2 the billion dollar plane due to its enormous cost, and Mr. Bissell pointed out that the airplane itself was comparatively cheap to construct and the cost of its equipment per plane was in the neighborhood of [redacted] including development costs. Mr. Brooks said he knew of the U-2 as a hush-hush project while it was being constructed at Lockheed.

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4. Mr. Bissell stressed the fact that NASA used the U-2 for perfectly legitimate, peaceful uses of its own, including weather studies and hurricane tracking where its high altitude characteristics gave it a unique capability. Also, it has been used for [redacted] and SAC and the Air Force also do special weather studies and have intermittently made peripheral intelligence flights on the legal side of the Soviet bloc. All these activities make up about 95 per cent of the utilization of the U-2. The 5 per cent remaining is accounted for by the

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deep penetration flights. Mr. Bissell emphasized the lines of command and particularly that when it was a penetration flight the command was purely civilian through CIA and one of the reasons for admitting this was so that the Russians could not make charges about the irresponsible military.

5. Mr. Brooks made it quite clear that he had no objection to the project and in fact indicated he felt it should be continued. His objection was to the manner of handling the initial report. He stated, however, that part of the problem was the manner in which the pilot gave out so much information so early. He asked how much of this briefing he could give to the key members of his Committee, and Mr. Bissell stated that he should feel free to give substantially what he had heard this afternoon. Mr. Brooks felt that on this basis he could take care of the matter quietly and informally and forestall an investigation.

3/ Lawrence R. Houston
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